



[Congress of the Peoples of the East, 1920](#)

## **First international anti-Imperialist congress, 1920**

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous “[Congress of the Peoples of the East](#)”, in Baku, convened by the Communist International in what is now the Republic of Azerbaijan [Picture: delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East]. Its manifesto (Attached, or click the link below) makes very clear the strategic confrontation that existed following the end of First World War hostilities, and the effective and menacing British Imperial victory, as they saw it.

This was the first international congress of oppressed nations against colonialism. It effectively launched the anti-colonial struggle on a new basis that bore major fruit less than thirty years later in the 1940s, with the independence of India and the victory of the communist revolutionaries in China.

In 1920, the Inter-Imperialist World War had only recently

come to an end. The congress said:

*“Peoples of the East! Six years ago there broke out in Europe a colossal, monstrous slaughter...*

*“It was fought for the partition of the world, and chiefly for the partition of Asia, of the East. It was fought to decide who was to rule over the countries of Asia and whose slaves the peoples of the East should be. It was fought to decide whether the British or the German capitalists should skin the peasants and workers of Turkey, Persia and Egypt.”*

The conference manifesto goes on to detail the threat that the victorious British posed towards the Peoples of the East in their many countries, large and small. We know by now that this manifesto was not mistaken. It concludes:

*“Long live the unity of all the peasants and workers of the East and of the West, the unity of all the toilers, all the oppressed and exploited. Long live the battle headquarters of this united movement — the Communist International! May the holy war of the peoples of the East and of the toilers of the whole world against imperialist Britain burn with unquenchable fire!”*

The Soviet Union is no more, yet the profound change in the entire world that is the consequence of the anti-colonial movement for independence and sovereignty of nations is still with us, in the form of nearly 200 independent nations, most of which did not exist, as such, at the time of the 2CCI and the Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920, and most of which are by now national-democratic republics.

For one example of how quickly the anti-colonial movement took hold, and how close to our home this movement quickly came, the Red Trade Union International (Profintern) of the Comintern, founded one year after the 2CCI, in 1921, had by 1930 organised (in Berlin) an [International Conference of Negro Workers](#) that included Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya as well as Moses Kotane, W. Thibedi and Albert Nzula of South Africa.

We should also not forget to mention the founding of the Communist Party of South Africa under the auspices of the Comintern in 1921 in this connection, because the admittance of the CPSA was conditional upon its acceptance of the Comintern's agreed policies, which included the NDR. Therefore the CPSA's support of class alliance for national liberation and national democracy was not something that was added on later, but was fully present at the birth of the CPSA.

Another example of the swift, strong effect of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern on South Africa is the Black Republic Thesis of 1928 and all that went with it. We will come to it in the next part of this NDR Generic Course. The important thing to note here is that the CPSA's basic commitment to the NDR had already existed for many years prior to the Black Republic Thesis.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Manifesto, Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).